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ABSTRACT

Elliot Eisner has sketched the outlines of the move toward plurality in educational research in an essay that embraces, perhaps unintentionally, a postmodern orientation that has the potential to disrupt the historically monolithic character of educational research. Eisner's discussion is expanded to suggest that qualitative research in educational leadership and school administration also is not monolithic. Researchers in school administration now embrace a plurality of methodological approaches, and this move toward pluralism, away from methodological meta-narratives, is a healthy one. The first part of this essay traces the recent history of scholarship in educational research as it moves away from modernity. The second part analyzes the epistemological shifts in the research "problem" in school administration. The use of educational images may be more appropriate to capture the range of nuanced understandings in educational research, and the arts seem to hold exceptionally strong promise to capture the nonscientific dimensions. The ultimate need is for a conception of aesthetics in both research and practice. Metaphorical language is well-suited for communicating research into educational school administration and educational leadership. (Contains 35 references.) (SLD)

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THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD: TOWARD A NOTION OF PLURALITY IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD: TOWARD A NOTION OF PLURALITY IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity. - Yeats

In the December 1998 issue of the Educational Researcher, Elliot Eisner lays out the parameters of the move toward plurality in educational research (Eisner, 1998). Eisner doesn't specify any field within the generic category of educational research. Rather his call embraces, perhaps unintentionally, a postmodern orientation, whose new epistemological and ontological underpinnings potentially disrupt the historically monolithic character of educational research. In education the putative dominant paradigm of the social sciences has tended to marginalize important theoretical and methodological insights from the humanities and the arts, and perhaps even the physical and mathematical sciences[1]. Eisner puts this issue squarely: "My own view is that (social?) science is a species of research; research is not a species of science" (p. 34, parenthetical comments, mine). In this essay I want to expand upon Eisner's brief argument to assert that (qualitative) research in educational leadership and school administration is not monolithic as well. Whether conscious or not, researchers in school administration now embrace a plurality of methodological approaches (Capper, 1998). Moreover, I believe that this move toward pluralism, away from methodological metanarratives, is a healthy one.

Let me try to sketch the contours of this evolution, which in more general terms Eisner refers to as a pattern characterized by "the dominance of quantification and correlation and experimental

[1] See Rick Ginsberg, "Complexity science at the schoolhouse gate?" Complexity, 2, 9-13.

research methods (that) has given way to what might be regarded as more interpretive approaches to the study of educational practice, to the illumination of schools and their neighborhoods, and to growing and more complex conceptions of the ways in which information is processed, stored and retrieved..." (ibid.). More abstractly, research in school administration, much like the shifts in educational research generally, mirrors an attempt to describe, analyze, interpret, and anticipate patterns in schools that are contingent upon the full range of human agents emotions, desires, and attempts to create meaning. In this regard, therefore, these movements in educational research both mirror and contextualize research and scholarship in the arts, humanities (especially history and literature) and cultural studies. On the other hand, they depend less on the research methodology of the physical sciences and mathematics, as these methods have been commonly understood.

In this essay I probe the dimensions of plurality that I assert increasingly constitutes research in educational leadership and school administration. The paper is organized into two major parts. The first part traces the recent history of scholarship in the field as it moves away from the vestiges of modernity. These vestiges, what I elsewhere depict as epistemological and political "icons" (see Mirón, Bogotch & Biesta, 1999, forthcoming) include the tendency to equate process with product, the separation of fact from values (hence from power and politics) and the overall inclination to commodify knowledge and knowing. (The analysis of the relational aspect of knowledge, its social construction, tends to be absent under the rubric of inquiry embedded in modernity and the Enlightenment in particular.) The second part analyzes the epistemological shifts in the research "problem" in school administration. In this section I argue with illustrations that the use of educational images may be more appropriate to capture the range of nuanced understandings in the areas mentioned above. I argue that the arts especially hold strong promise to capture these non-scientific dimensions. Ultimately I assert that what is needed is a conception of aesthetics both in research and practice.

TRANSITIONAL MOVES INTO POSTMODERNISM

Since William Foster published *Paradigms and Promises* in 1986, scholarship and research in school administration have sought in part to understand how school leaders and others inject values into the everyday life of the school. Examining values became part of a larger intellectual project--a more sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of unequal power relations in the schools. As Apple's culturally grounded political-economic perspective had long established in curriculum theory, critical research in school administration situated schools in their broader contexts of multiple social relations in the wider society. In brief this research helped problematize educational leadership generally and school administration especially as a political-discursive activity and social space. This critical turn was a transitional move in educational research toward postmodernism, that is, a move to embrace plurality. Constas (1998) observes with specification that:

> the advance of postmodernism in educational research can be explained by concurrent transitions that have transpired within three dimensions. The political dimension was selected because it reflects the development of interest in critical theories and other neo-Marxist formulations of education (Giroux, 1981, following the work of Gramsci (1971) and Entwistle (1979). The methodological dimension was selected because of the dramatic increase in qualitative methodologies witnessed during the 1980s. The representational dimension was identified because of the altered styles of writing used by educational researchers (see Eisner, 1997, and 1998, above). Whereas educational research has changed in many ways, I would argue that these three dimensions represent the areas in which the most fundamental transitions have occurred (p. 37).

The emphasis within critical writing on unequal power relations, and in particular the political ideologies that engulf the value-laden decisions that school administrators make, marked the first ripple in the tide of mainstream research in school administration that was previously dominated by positivism and its corollary in administration, Scientific Taylorism (see Mirón, Biesta, and Bogotch, forthcoming 1999).

PROBLEMATIZING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Knowledge and power

My point of departure is deceptively simple: forms of knowledge emanating from a social science perspective are socially constructed. It is futile to claim that knowledge, and its underpinning ways of knowing, can be positively and universally established by the methods of the social and human sciences. However, rather than simply dismiss the quest for the advancement of scientific knowledge from research in school administration as a futile enterprise, our task is to foreground the politics of knowledge (Popkewitz, 1998). Foucault's understanding of the knowledge-power relation is paramount to the goal of this project--articulating the epistemological basis of the transition to postmodernism in educational research, in particular its emerging plurality in scholarship on school administration and educational leadership.

At the heart of Foucalt's (1980, 1982) complex perspective is a serious challenge to the idea of the human subject as an ego or consciousness that is fully present to itself, capable of acquiring a complete and transparent knowledge of itself and its social/historical situation.[2] Foucault "saw knowledge as always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice" (Hall, 1997). Knowledge is constituted in language. So is the human subject. Both are effects of power relations (Popkewitz, 1998; Mirón & Inda, 1999, in press). These power relations are inherently unequal (Cherryholmes, 1988). Moreover, they operate through specific discourses and discursive formations. Both have the effect of prescribing and shaping conduct subscribing to certain norms that set limits on the human subject and agency.

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[2] Although the political/progressive implications of this radical concept exceeds the scope of this paper, it is nonetheless instructive to note that an assumption of the Enlightenment is that such knowledge works potentially to liberate and emancipate only this autonomous ego but indeed the networks of other oppressed communities of which it is a member. For an elaboration of this view, see Louis F. Mirón, Gert Biesta, and Ira Bogotch, "Moral-Ethical Leadership as New Beginnings." forthcoming, 1999.

However, as I have argued elsewhere (see Mirón & Inda, 1999, in press) this is not at all to imply that the subject is completely determined. Although actors such as educational leaders, and school administrators, are constituted in discourse and as such are an effect of power, the subject is still a human agent. The subject can act, precisely because as Judith Butler has noted, "if the subject is constituted by power, that power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, for that subject is never fully constituted, but is subjected and produced time and time again" (1995, p. 223; also see below section on engineering images).

The postmodern project generally, and specifically within educational research and its scholarly sub-fields of school administration and educational leadership, has seriously questioned the main features of the epistemological worldview of modernity. In particular, it has challenged the understanding of the subject as an ego or consciousness that exists outside of (and therefore also prior to) history (Popkewtiz, 1998b). Moreover, it has likewise challenged the subsequent understanding of knowledge as a neutral registration/representation by this ego or consciousness of the world "outside." Contrary to the notion that the subject is its own point of departure, postmodernism stresses that the subject is a *"constituted* subject" (Butler, 1992, p. 9, emphasis mine) that is, a subject that is always inscribed in history. For example, decisions that school administrators make, and the values that underpin their professional judgments, have a history: they come from somewhere and are linked to such sociopolitical dynamics as the relationship of the school to its local community, the authoritative position of administration and of course to issues of class, gender, and race.[3] As Foucault makes clear, the subject "is not a pre-given entity which is seized upon by exercise of power," but rather, the "product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces" (Foucault, 1980, pp. 73-74). To claim that the subject is constituted is therefore not to claim that the subject is pre-determined. Rather, it is a recognition of the fact that the subject "comes into presence" in a specific social and historical

[3] Space does not permit me here to elaborate on the analytical and theoretical problematics of the "race question." For this purpose, see Rodolfo Torres, Louis F. Mirón and Jonathan Inda, "Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader.

situation (see Biesta, 1998). The constituted character of the subject is thus to be understood as the very precondition of its agency (Butler, 1992, pp. 12-13), its capacity for resistance (Mirón, 1996). The constituted subject is *not* a negation of human agency and social action. My assertion is that politics is assumed, not disbanded within ontological assumptions of the constituted, decentered subject.

Moreover, and central to the development of the arguments advanced in this essay, is the idea that knowledge, or what Thomas Popkewitz describes as "the system of reason," is not a neutral registration/representation of the world outside. Foucault, in other words, sees "knowledge as always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice..." (Hall, 1997, p. 47). Postmodern epistemology stresses that knowledge is always already contaminated by the very forces that constitute the knowing subject. Knowledge is constructed, and as we shall see below, the content of the scientific "problem" of research in school administration is contextually defined (Constas, 1998, p. 38). Foucault argues that "power and knowledge directly imply one another," such that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1979, p. 27 cited in Mirón, Bogotch & Biesta, 1999, forthcoming, p. 7).[4]

The implication for research in school administration and educational leadership is that knowledge--here the solutions or alternatives to the scientifically defined problem--cannot be used to combat power. School administrators cannot obtain a transparent knowledge of their own social-historical situation, which they can then use to liberate themselves and their students, arriving at a state of

[4]It is vital to understand that Foucault's power/knowledge thesis does not imply a reduction of knowledge to power (which would only be possible if power and knowledge were in some original sense exterior to one another). It, rather, is an acknowledgment of the fact that power/knowledge is a knot that cannot be unraveled.

freedom from oppression and other social injustices. These include forms of discrimination and institutional racism.[5]

Defining the research problem

Scientific research in school administration, at the most basic level of understanding, requires an approximation of objectivity. By this I mean that an intellectual distance exits between the investigator and the so-called objects of investigation, school administration and administrative leaders. This is problematic on two levels. First there is the question of values. Foster (1986), Bill Greenfield (19xx) and others convincingly established that, at the level of practice in school administration, leaders inject values into decisions and policy. School administration is a decidedly political act, even more so the practice of educational leadership (Mirón, 1997, p. 20). Extending Foucault's knowledge-power "knot," I want to argue that values and the facts of administrative problems are inseparable. The problems themselves, as I have stated elsewhere (1996, 1999) are socially constructed. Thus studying proposed solutions—and the consequences of what I would term educational answers (quick fixes)—is laden with issues of context (Constas, 1998). Research into the problems of practice in school administration is, in effect, investigations into the questions embedded in the sociology of knowledge and the politics of knowledge.

Ernest Nagel (1979) theorized "that there is a necessary *logical* connection, and not merely a contingent or causal one, between the 'social perspective' of a student of human affairs and his standards of competent social inquiry, and in consequence the influence of the special values to which he is committed..." (p. 498, emphasis author's). Research in the human and social sciences, thus, is contingent on historically relative influences. More to the point of this essay, since social organizations (public schools) are in constant flux, be they so-called open or closed systems, the intellectual apparatus summons to study such phenomena needs changing as well.

[5] I am aware that I have partly contradicted what I have written elsewhere. In *Resisting Discrimination: Affirmative Strategies for Principals and Teachers* I suggest, for example, that knowledge of potential school partnerships and other political lies can over time eliminate racism from public schooling. This may be more difficult to achieve than I had realized.

(Ibid.). This is especially the case when the emotions, desires, beliefs, and meanings human agents bring to the research problem marks the scope of investigation. I will have more to say on this later in the essay.

On a second level school administration especially and educational leadership in particular is a human and social enterprise. That is, the process is a historical one, albeit a process that *may* be illuminated by the methods of the social and human sciences. I agree with Eisner's assertion (cited above), however, that this process of discovery need not be limited to science. Indeed as avant-garde research designs such as arts-based inquiry increasingly make their way into the mainstream of educational research, other approaches reminiscent of the arts and humanities might better capture the range of language, emotions, and desires of the multiple practices and processes of school administration and educational leadership. These are moves toward postmodernism, that is, toward plurality. In the next section I want to explore the usefulness of common sense images in education to unpack the multiple social constructions of research, both quantitative and qualitative. Below I present what I consider the hegemonic images governing education and analyze their potential effects on research in school administration and educational leadership.

These governing images and metaphors of education shape the way researchers think about the research problem and larger sets of empirical and theoretical guiding questions. In other words images (and their more elaborate rhetorical counterparts, metaphors) vigorously shape our conceptual models of educational research. As such they are more than merely rhetorical devices; as Lakoff and Johnson observe, metaphors (are) "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (1980, p. 3). Understanding the prevailing images and underlying metaphors governing education may be an analytical key to unlock the doors of plurality in educational research. For me it ultimately points the way toward the primacy of the aesthetic in teaching and learning (Arnstein, 1995).

THE IMAGES OF EDUCATION

My assumption is that the language and research methods of the arts, cultural studies, and the humanities best capture the emerging plurality of research in educational leadership and school administration. Furthermore, since knowledge emanating from the social sciences is socially constructed, care must be given to distinguish between material (physical) reality and social (non-physical) reality. In this essay I am especially concerned with the latter forms of reality as they relate to the understanding of the realm of desires, emotions, and meanings school actors bring to the processes of valuing and decision-making. School administration approaches the arts and is akin to a craft. Techniques of the decision sciences notwithstanding, administrators are like artists and craftsmen in that their professional judgments cannot escape their value preferences and feelings brought to the administrative problem (or task). For wont of more precise terminology let me divide the prevailing educational images into three types: modern, postmodern, and hybrid (or aesthetic). The aesthetic images are hybrid because they are pluralistic, that is, they embrace both modern and postmodern images. Moreover aesthetic images in education complete the postmodern transition in educational research in that they more completely and accurately capture the intellectual and emotional movements of the bodies that live the practices of education.

Thinking modern

What distinguishes modern educational images most fundamentally is their universality, their non-plurality. More concretely, modern educational metaphors are inappropriate. This is so because such metaphors are *incomplete*. They primarily focus on the educational product and hence reify the tendency to commodify knowledge and knowing.

Table I
Modern Images

- Medical
  - clinical v.s. "experimental"/innovative
- Engineering
  - fix failing schools, school improvement
- Industrial / Business
  - education as "product"
  - high performance
  - accountability
- Athletic
  - a game with clear winners and losers
  - no rewards for failures
  - allows setting of high academic standards

Among others these include the medical, engineering, industrial/business, and the athletic images in education. Concepts that emerge during the deployment of the medical image are illness and disease ("the school system is sick!"); conversely images of the healthy organism can be invoked as well, though perhaps not as frequently as that of disease. (Interestingly, the disease metaphor functions in clinical terms, that is, the language used connotes a technical problem (acute or chronic illness)-- one that must be remedied. Experimental purposes of the image that would spurn innovation in education is shunted for more solvable "treatments." I would prefer importing physical science experimental methods and the sense of experimentation and innovation, rather than view educational "illness" clinically. The consequences of a clinical mode of thinking—given that an educational disease is merely metaphorical—is an abiding sense of crisis (Mirón, 1996).

Next is the engineering image, in particular civil engineering, the profession of building bridges and the like. This one appears to be America's favorite. Like the current call to save or fix social security in time for the retirement years of the baby boomers, both education bureaucrats and politicians understandably desire to fix failing schools. The assumption is that when the schools are finally fixed, the process is completed. Rarely entertained is the notion that the work of school improvement is never over. It's a continuous process. Finally, an unintended consequence of this mode of thinking is the social reproduction of school inequalities in the inner city and in rural

communities. It is rare to learn of a failing school in the suburbs in need of engineering redesign, certainly not the affluent ones. Closely linked to the engineering image is the industrial/business one. Perhaps the most widely used of the images emanating from modernity, it is most embedded in capitalists' social relations. The concern is with the education "product." Mirroring the growth in the global economy and in the stock market, the focus is on the production of statistical gains from high performing schools. Those that fail to achieve at high levels, or worse, academically fail altogether, or are punished. This form of accountability is evident in President Clinton's reform proposal to end federal funding to states that do not improve failing schools, and more recently in Governor Gray Davis' proposed education reform initiatives.

My last modern educational image is familiar to all of the soccer parents in the research community. This is the sports competition image. The assumption is that the education race is a zero-sum game. That is, there are clear winners and losers. Of course, in every zero-sum game the winners come at the expense of the losers. As pointed out in the description of the industrial/business metaphor above, society rewards performance. There are no rewards for failures. Leo Durocher put it best. "Nice guys finish last." Collaboration, here the idea that gains can be made when learning is mutual, gets lost. On the other hand, a positive definition of the education problem as an athletic contest potentially allows for the setting of high academic standards.

Postmodern images

In the main postmodern images in education tend to focus on the problems of the individual or the collective. Since they put human actors, and their social relations, at the center I assert that such images guiding the underlying metaphor are more complete. These images are potentially more useful because they capture phenomena closer to the enterprise of education, teaching and learning.

Table II
Postmodern Images

- Psychological
  - confidence
    fluctuations in performance
- Family Educational
  - meet individual student needs
  - social group
  - community

First is the psychological image. Borrowed unknowingly from the Chinese view of health, the psychological image focuses on the issue of confidence. Viewed from this perspective, so-called failing schools would not be primarily a problem of the institution, but rather one of confidence intrinsic to the learner. The educational task—if you will, problem-- would consist of restoring confidence to the individual learner. Like its counterpart in industry and the economy, fluctuations in performance would be analyzed in terms of customer confidence. The customer here is the student and the parent or caretaker. This segues into the family image.

In the family educational image the emphasis is on meeting individual student needs or caring for a social group. An example would be African Americans whose family members grew up during the Civil Rights Movement. These families view access to educational opportunity as entitlement, not a privilege (Mirón & Lauria, 1998). As my work has shown many African American parents from poor and lower middle class backgrounds demand equality of educational opportunity for their children. It's important to bear in mind that the gamut of student needs is provided for—emotional, social and academic. In addition to the family, students' individual needs can also be met in community. Collaborative learning models, for example, peer tutoring can flourish. Respect and trust, in addition to caretaking, are the social foci. The social relations governing the educational enterprise is the analytic unit. Thus mutuality defines the educational experience, and the quality of learning is considered to be a by-product of collaboration between student and teacher, what Biesta (1994) conceptualizes philosophically as "practical intersubjectivity."

In summary what primarily distinguishes a modern from a postmodern educational orientation as expressed through the use of images is the concern of the former with problems of learning—outcomes, organizational functionality and commodification (the learner as product). By contrast postmodern images recall the human dimension, the learner herself, whether encapsulated in psychological processes or social relations. Next I want to extend the postmodern metaphor, and its stress on understanding education as a human enterprise, into the realm of aesthetics.

A CONCEPTION OF THE AESTHETIC

Hybrid (Aesthetic) Metaphors

Table III
Hybrid Images

- Quality of Learning Experiences
  - idealistic level (imagination)
  - superficial level (matter of taste)
- Two Dimensions
  - teaching
    high quality of learning experience
  - learning
    experiences (three types of activity)
    1. problem solving
    2. pursuit of curiosity
    3. learning - attend more fully to see clearly

Following Dewey, the aesthetic educational image captures the *quality* of the learning experience—as perceived by the individual learner or social groups (learning communities, racial-ethnic minorities and so on). At an idealistic level this image invokes the sense of beauty, wonder, curiosity and a literary imagination. Superficially it concerns matters of taste; however, I want to use the ideas of Donald Arnstein to explore substantively how this image might engage more substantive questions relevant to the needs of particular kinds of students (my concern is with inner city students). By examining the dimensions of aesthetics in public schooling, more attention can be given to matters of design, the quality of the learning environment, and the craft of teaching.

These foci have significant implications for research in school administration and educational leadership, as I will demonstrate at the conclusion of this essay

Elsewhere I have written that in particular "urban schools lack aesthetic sensibilities" (see Mirón, 1996, p.). Usually we attribute aesthetics in education to programs such as arts in education. These programs have been somewhat successful in raising academic achievement in schools (see Catterall, 1998). They range from employing part time performing artists (dancers, poets, and sculptors) in elementary and secondary schools to comprehensive educational tours such as Wynton Marsalis' tribute to Duke Ellington at the Lincoln Center. These tours are nationwide and are often associated with organizations such as the National Association of Jazz Educators, which held its recent national convention in Orange County this past November.

Rarely, however, do practitioners and educational researchers think of the converse scenario: education in arts, or more specifically education through the arts or the aesthetic experience. The latter would involve at least a partial realization of an aesthetic quality in the classroom. To get a glimpse of what this means, especially in light of research and practice in school administration and educational leadership, I turn now to the writings of Donald Arnstine. In Democracy and the Arts of Schooling (1995), Arnstine develops a conception of "the primacy of the aesthetic." By this he means that aesthetic qualities must be present in schooling for schooling to have an educative effect on the learner, that is beyond its successful institutional function of socialization. Put simply, the primacy of the aesthetic in schooling means a "concern... to create conditions that will help students have experiences of high quality" (p. 68). I want to distinguish between two dimensions of aesthetics in education, teaching and learning, or between teacher and student. The latter two are of course the key primary actors in schooling, the other being parents or family type support groups.

Teaching

The goals for the teacher within this framework are to create in the classroom a climate that fosters high quality learning experiences. This climate set by the classroom teacher will, in turn, result in the learning of "dispositions," that is, those habits of mind and heart that result in and stem from reflection.

> When an experience is high in quality and *also* involves thought, it is aesthetic in quality" (p. 69). Teachers must focus on the elimination of routine activities (busy work) that go a long way toward maintaining control over students' behaviors, but have the unintended effect of disengaging them from instruction and therefore probably from learning as well. The overall purpose of developing a classroom climate that embraces the primacy of the aesthetic is to: "treat our students as active individuals, responsive to their social group yet growing in power to make discriminating judgments. For this growth to occur, they need to act thoughtfully in ways that are characteristics of experience when it's aesthetic (p. 70).

The underlying theoretical assumption appears to be rooted in the community metaphor, which contains the idea of mutual respect and trust. Otherwise such a climate is doubtful.

Specifics are needed. What produces thoughtful engagement reminiscent of the arts is the teacher's ability to foster confrontation in the student. Following Derrida, by "confrontation" I mean the violent collision with the unexpected (Derrida, 1992) or as Arnstine notes, "a discrepancy." This involves the resolution between what the student expected to learn based on prior experiences and information and what is actually true based on empirical evidence or logic. For example the idea that Latino parents actually may want to participate as active parents with their teachers in the learning process may come as somewhat of a surprise to many Anglo students in teacher education courses who cite empirical research that finds that such parents do not value education. What students actually "do" with the discrepancy—how they do or do not resolve it—is the intellectual work of becoming a student and ultimately becoming educated. This work is a process of practical intersubjectivity, which Biesta (1995) has conceptualized as the interactive process between teachers and students in the classroom.

Learning

Arnstine takes a *performative* (Mirón & Inda, 1999, in press) view of learning.[6] Here learning means doing, both in the discursive sense as discourse- actions as well as in the behaviouristic sense, as concrete action. The actions, furthermore, stem from the encounters with discrepancies mentioned above. These discrepancies (the unexpected knowledge that students confront) is a result of the climate teachers instill in the classroom. In aesthetic terms students must *desire* such encounters—more specifically be willing to engage in the process of their resolutions—in order for high quality thought to emerge. Learning defined by discursive actions as well as more goal oriented problem solving is of three fundamental types: "The resolution of discrepancies ordinarily affords aesthetic quality to experience and results in learning. We resolve discrepancies by engaging in one of three broad types of activities... you may try to overcome the obstacle in the interests of achieving the goal. This is usually called problem-solving… When something unusual—that is unexpected—catches your attention, you may seek to understand it more fully, *without necessarily doing anything about it.* This is recognized as the pursuit of curiosity. Finally, when your attention is caught by something unusually lovely or attractive, you attend to it more fully in order to see it more clearly, as a unified and meaningful whole. (Learning) Experience then is dominantly aesthetic in character. The aesthetic appears in the experience of all three types of activity, but we're less aware of it when we're trying to solve a problem or satisfy our curiosity" (p. 73). In a word deep learning—genuine knowledge—is at the heart of the primacy of the aesthetic.

CONSEQUENCES OF COMMON SENSE EDUCATIONAL IMAGES

It is apparent that a tendency toward commodification is a consequence of the epistemology of modernity. Educational metaphors such as the athletic and business metaphors grossly illustrate these tendencies in modernity, tendencies that are legacies of the Enlightenment and the Age of

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[6] For a detailed explanation of performativity theory, see Louis F. Mirón & Jonathan Inda, "Race as Performativity," Cultural Studies Annals.

Reason. The education "product" is a prime example. Less obvious illustrations are found in other modern metaphors, however. For example, the engineering metaphor, a favorite of neo-liberals, sees education as a problem of organizational structure, that is, the attempt to technically design the correct system of learning. Research in educational leadership and school administration is potentially plagued with serious ontological and epistemological difficulties. If the purpose of schools is to perform, for example, researchers might understandably conclude that the school administrator, a near mythical figure, caused the school to fail or to or excel. Virtually no serious student of educational leadership, much less experienced practitioners, would make such a claim. Nonetheless popular culture and media are riddled with images of the gallant teachers who turn around failing classrooms and their test scores overnight. Just picture Jaime Escalante.

I want to be especially clear here. The point is not that leadership in education doesn't matter. Of course it does. The danger is that when such metaphors are applied unscruplelessly to "failing" or "high performing" schools the mistaken notion may ensue that lifting educational performance to lofty academic heights is the *sole* purpose of schooling. Other, potentially more fundamental goals such as community development initiatives (Crowson & Boyd, forthcoming, 2000) may get buried. What is problematic is not so much the social perspective of the researcher of school administration. Rather, by not examining the language and symbols embedded in the use of metaphors, the conclusions of the investigator perhaps point in the wrong direction. Politicians and policymakers might, for instance, spend billions to fix an educational bridge leading to nowhere! As recent work by Anyon, and myself have established the issue in many cases is not failing schools, but rather failed school reform and distressed communities.

What is needed is balance. Educational metaphors, whether modern or postmodern, are not going to go away. Balance can be reestablished by employing what I call postmodern metaphors. I begin with the psychological metaphor and borrow from a recent documentary on the global

economy. In China classroom teachers view the learning enterprise as an organic problem. That is students' full range of human needs must be provided for if they are going to develop the confidence to succeed. The distinctions may appear academic to the general public, but restoring confidence is *not* equivalent to the development of self- esteem. The latter is perhaps rightly criticized as "feel good" learning. Academic confidence is not primarily about positive emotions, although this is a part of it. It concerns the feedback students derive when they are academically successful. This position harks the language of modernity, yet extends beyond the perspective that educational leadership concerns tasks devoid of human beings. By attending to the full range of care for students—emotional, social, safety, and academic, such positive feedback resulting from academic attainment is more probable. Invoking the family metaphor alongside the psychological one may yield gains for research and practice in school administration. Researchers benefit because our attention is refocused on the human beings and social action that lies at the heart of the improvement of education and schooling. Practitioners, too, can more confidently follow their heart and recognize that such values as resilience, a positive family environment at school, safety, and other needs in Maslow's hierarchy need not compete with academic goals. Indeed they are complementary.

Finally, the community metaphor may hold the most promise in the postmodern camp. The sense of community is what's missing in contemporary society. A sense of place and shared values that marks the experience of community is systematically being infused into schools through parent and community involvement (see Epstein, 1993), school-community and business partnerships and the design of schools as communities of learners. This move is understandably appealing in that unequal power relations may be more balanced in favor of families and residents, even students, although students are frequently cast as the "other" in schools (Mirón, Bogotch, & Biesta, 1999, forthcoming).

Moreover, my research shows that schools in the inner city have a difficult time establishing a climate of trust and mutual respect (Mirón, 1997, 1996). Research in school administration that reveals in detail the processes whereby such conditions are positively and deeply established may conclude that academic outcomes may not matter so much in the long term if students deprived of healthy social conditions grow up learning how to trust adults, resolve conflicts by negotiation, and appreciate social, class, gender differences.

In summary the transition to postmodern metaphors appropriately refocuses our scholarly and practical attention to human beings. The actions that educational actors, for example superintendents and building principals take, are not "things" that lead to better products. Quite to the contrary human agency, which depends on scientifically derived knowledge, is historically contingent because the agent *is historically contingent*, that is, constituted in language and forever reconstituted (Butler, 1993). The postmodern moved are healthy for understanding theory, research, and practice in school administration. By themselves, however, their application via the use of educational metaphors is unlikely to engage students. Next I move on to a consideration of the quality of educational experience, that is a concern with aesthetics.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING IMAGES FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The embrace of aesthetics

The first two dimensions of the aesthetic in learning, problem solving and the pursuit of curiosity, I put in the modernist camp. Research in educational administration and leadership, following the canon of the social sciences, is above all concerned with the identification of the "problem." Putatively by focusing squarely on the precise definition of the research problem, research can aid practice in its search for practical solutions. "Education can be fixed." Next the pursuit of curiosity engulfs a scholarly orientation whereby attention to theory and explanation is called for. Practitioners need not "do anything" about the fact that "something unusual catches your attention." There is no problem to solve, only investigations to be launched.

I would argue that full attention is not a quality that is cultivated in the conduct of everyday research in administration or practice. Both are too monolithic. Research of the quantitative or qualitative kind is usually not overtly concerned with the cultivation of beauty. The arts serve this purpose. For the most part schools are not lovely places to study, especially in dilapidated buildings in inner cities across America. There are promising avant-garde developments, to be sure. Eisner's Arts-Based Research groups are a prime example. Forms borrowing from the arts and humanities, for example, short stories and poetry, drama, collage and photography invoke aesthetics because these pluralistic research techniques capture the range of human emotions. They are concerned with the human experience in education. The use of metaphors and metaphorical language better captures the absent humanism. Since it is largely impossible to fully know the depth of human experience, such knowledge is perhaps better communicated symbolically.

Although these movements have spilled over into administration and leaderships, with the exception of Maxcy's work on aesthetic intelligence, little recognition of beauty is acknowledged. Indeed, Keat's adage that "truth is beauty, and beauty, truth," are binary oppositions that have not been resolved. The engagement with their resolution would be of benefit toward the growth of pluralism in research.

A return to the senses

Realizing the aesthetic experience in education brings researchers back to reality, to the physicality of the body. This achievement is more than merely theoretic. It brings educational discourse back to the material plane and reorients our attention to what teachers and students actually live in their classrooms. To be sure other techniques can do this, oral histories, performance art. But these are tangential to education; their goal is secondary to improving the quality of the learning experience.

To accomplish quality in practice, and to focus on the quality of education as the overarching research question we need a framework that spotlights the five senses.

CONCLUSION

It seems that metaphorical language is better suited for communicating research into educational school administration and educational leadership. The move toward plurality long established in the disciplines in the arts and humanities, and recently initiated in educational inquiry, can perhaps spill over into our field. Arnstine's notion of "the primacy of the aesthetic," moreover, captures the conceptual move that is required for the postmodern turn to be complete. This would make such a completed transition more palpable as it would embrace a concern with human beings as they struggle to make and communicate meaning in schools and other places of teaching and learning.

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